

Arlington Heights, Ill. – U.S. Representative Mark Kirk joined with local veterans today to introduce bipartisan legislation that would significantly boost dental care for service-connected disabled veterans. The “Make Our Veterans Smile Act” (H.R. 5595) was co-introduced by Congressman Kirk and Congressman Chris Carney (D-Penn.), the U.S. House’s only actively serving U.S. Navy Reserve intelligence officers. Currently, only 100 percent disabled, homeless or prisoner-of-war veterans are eligible for dental benefits. The bill expands dental coverage to any service-connected disabled veteran, regardless of disability rating starting Jan. 1, 2009.

“We need to ensure that those who wore the uniform, risked their lives and sacrificed so much are appropriately cared for,” Congressman Kirk said. “We won a great victory for area veterans when we saved the North Chicago VA Hospital from closing. But the commitment the government makes to help care for disabled veterans is incomplete without addressing their dental needs. I am honored to join with Congressman Carney, my colleague in the House and in the Navy, to make sure that our disabled veterans want for nothing after they leave the service.”

According to the U.S. Veterans Administration, 258,000 veterans currently are eligible for dental benefits. More than 2.5 million additional disabled veterans would receive coverage under the Kirk-Carney bill. In Illinois, coverage would expand from nearly 5,000 veterans to more than 60,000 veterans, according to the Congressional Research Service.

Congressman Kirk was joined by American Legion Post 208 Commander Tom Foglestad and local veterans. A copy of the legislation is below.

110th CONGRESS

2d Session

H. R. 5595

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide dental care to veterans with service-connected disabilities, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 12, 2008

Mr. CARNEY (for himself and Mr. KIRK) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide

dental care to veterans with service-connected disabilities, and for other purposes.
Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ‘Make Our Veterans Smile Act of 2008’.

SEC. 2. PROVISION OF DENTAL CARE BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO VETERANS WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES.

(a) Provision of Care- Section 1712(a)(1)(G) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking ‘rated as total’.

(b) Authority To Provide Care by Entering Into Contracts- Section 1703(a)(7) of such title is amended by striking ‘section 1712(a)(1)(F)’ and inserting ‘section 1712(a)(1)’.

(c) Effective Date- The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) shall apply with respect to outpatient dental services and treatment, and related dental appliances, furnished on or after January 1, 2009.